

**A CROSS-SECTIONAL INVESTIGATION OF INTERLINGUAL &
INTRALINGUAL ERRORS MADE BY EFL ARAB JORDANIAN
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS IN THEIR
WRITING**

by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا ۖ أَفًا وَلَا تَنْهَرَهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا (٢٣) وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَرْحَمْهُمَا
كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (٢٤)

Dedication

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

**“And thy Lord has decreed that ye serve none but Him, and do well to parents
.....and say: My Lord, have mercy on them, as they brought me up when I was
young .” (Qur?aan : al-?israa? 23-24**

**To the soul and memory of my father whose loving care and encouragement was
with me all his life and did not live on to see the completion of this work. I only
wish he could have been here to share me these moments and to see this finished
work, but I know that this is what he would have wanted.**

My Lord Have Mercy on him

**To my beloved mother who has to bear father’s departure and my absence in
the time of hardship and whose patience and prayers have never stopped
supported me in the journey,thank you mother for all your patience and prayers**

My Lord Have Mercy on her

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	:	Al-Balqa' Applied University
Acq	:	Acquisition
ALALC	:	American Library Association –Library of Congress
CA	:	Contrastive Analysis
CAH	:	Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
Comp	:	Composition
EA	:	Error Analysis
EFL	:	English as a Foreign Language
EL	:	English Language
ELT	:	English Language Teaching
ERP	:	Educational Reform Plan
ESA	:	Educated Spoken Arabic
ESL	:	English as a Second Language
FA	:	False Analogy
FC	:	False Concept
FLA	:	Foreign Language Acquisition
GSCE	:	General secondary Certificate Examination
IE	:	Induced Errors
Ign	:	Ignorance
Incomp R	:	Incomplete application of rule
Interl	:	Interlingual
Intral	:	Intralingual
IL	:	Interlanguage
L1	:	Native Language (Mother Tongue)

L2	:	Target Language (Second Language i.e. English)
MCT	:	Multiple-Choice Test
MSA	:	Modern Standard Arabic
Missel	:	Misselection
MT	:	Mother Tongue
MTELP	:	Michigan Test English Language Proficiency
MTI	:	Mother Tongue Interference
NL	:	Native Language
NSA	:	Non-Standard Arabic
OG	:	Overgeneralization
OLP	:	Other Language Problems
Om	:	Omission
PAUC	:	Princess Alia University College
RQ	:	Research Question
Simp	:	Simplification
SLA	:	Second Language Acquisition
TEFL	:	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TL	:	Target Language
TLI	:	Target language Interference
TEOFL	:	Teaching English for Others as a Foreign Language
UG	:	Under-Generalization
Uni	:	Unique

**PENYIASATAN RENTAS-SILANG DARIPADA KESILAPAN INTERLINGUAL
DAN INTRALINGUAL YANG DILAKUKAN OLEH PELAJAR ARAB YANG
MENGIKUTI EFL DI UNIVERSITI DI JORDAN DALAM PENGGUNAAN KATA
DEPAN DALAM PENULISAN MEREKA**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini berhubung dengan penyiasatan rentas-silang tentang kesilapan penggunaan kata depan / preposisi dalam penulisan, dalam kalangan pelajar Arab EFL tahun satu, dua dan tiga di universiti-universiti di Jordan. Kajian ini bertujuan mengenal pasti jenis kesilapan yang sering dilakukan oleh pelajar, dalam usaha menentukan sama ada ia berlaku disebabkan interferens / gangguan interlingual atau intralingual. Data kajian ini diperoleh daripada komposisi bebas (Comp) dan ujian pelbagai pilihan (MCT), berdasarkan sampel rawak berstrata daripada 162 pelajar yang mempunyai latar belakang yang sama dari segi bahasa, sosiobudaya dan pendidikan. Setiap kesilapan dikenal pasti, dianalisis dan kemudiannya dikelaskan di bawah satu daripada lima jenis kata depan. Lanjutan daripada itu, dapat ditentukan sama ada interferens tersebut berlaku disebabkan oleh faktor bahasa ibunda (MT) atau bahasa sasaran (target language). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kesilapan interlingual adalah yang terbanyak. Pelajar Arab menggunakan kata depan bahasa Inggeris yang betul dengan syarat ada padanan dalam MT mereka; menggunakan kata depan yang tidak sesuai jika tiada padanan dalam MT mereka: tidak menggunakannya jika padanannya tidak diperlukan dalam MT mereka, dan akan menambah kata depan jika padanannya diperlukan dalam MT mereka. Jelas bahawa MT mempengaruhi pilihan kata depan yang tepat. Kesilapan intralingual juga dikesan dan didapati menjadi satu daripada penyumbang utama masalah ini. Dengan meningkatnya kemahiran, maka kebergantungan kepada pindahan berkurangan dan kebergantungan kepada pengitlakan juga turut berkurangan. Didapati, pelajar tahun dua dan tahun pertama melakukan perkadaran kesilapan yang paling tinggi berbanding dengan peringkat kelas bawah. Sebaliknya, perkadaran kesilapan yang dilakukan oleh pelajar tahun satu adalah melebihi perkadaran kesilapan pelajar tahun dua. Hal ini menjelaskan bahawa secara kuantitatifnya peringkat kelas mempunyai kesan yang ketara terhadap prestasi subjek, dan trend kesilapan yang ditunjukkan oleh ketiga-tiga peringkat kelas dalam kelima-lima jenis kata depan adalah sama. Tiada persetujuan yang jelas terhadap tuduhan bahawa pelajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) peringkat kelas bawahan melakukan sama ada kesilapan-pindahan atau kesilapan-pengitlakan, yang berbeza daripada yang dilakukan oleh pelajar EFL peringkat kelas atasan. Sebaliknya, mereka menggunakan kedua-dua strategi pembelajaran ini untuk pengajian ijazah yang

berbeza. Merujuk Comp, tiada terdapat kaitan yang konsisten dengan bilangan kesilapan yang dilakukan. Kefahaman yang mendalam daripada maklum balas tentang masalah ini semasa kuliah, membantu keputusan kuantitatif. Persepsi serta cadangan pensyarah turut dimuatkan dalam dapatan kajian, yang diilustrasikan daripada respons soal selidik. Analisis keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan kata depan yang tidak betul adalah sesuatu yang lumrah dalam kalangan pelajar Arab EFL, termasuklah mereka yang berada pada tahap pembelajaran yang lebih tinggi. Bukti ini menyokong pendapat bahawa interferens sebagai strategi pembelajaran kognitif, yang pelajaranya mengaplikasikan pengetahuan dan pengalaman mereka terhadap bahasa sasaran. Akhirnya keputusan mengasingkan kesalahan yang telah dilakukan oleh subjek maka adalah penting bagi para instraktor dan pelajar memeriksa kesalahan-kesalahan yang sering dilakukan serta punca kepada penyebab kesalahan tersebut.

**A CROSS-SECTIONAL INVESTIGATION OF INTERLINGUAL &
INTRALINGUAL ERRORS MADE BY EFL ARAB JORDANIAN UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS IN THEIR WRITING**

ABSTRACT

The present study was a cross-sectional investigation into Arab Jordanian first-, second- and third-year university EFL students' errors in the use of prepositions in written language production. It aimed at identifying the types of errors students make to determine whether the possible source of the errors can be attributed to interlingual or intralingual interference. The data for this study was derived from free composition (Comp) and Multiple-choice test (MCT) performed by a stratified random sample of 162 students with similar linguistic, sociocultural, and educational backgrounds. Each error was identified, analyzed and then classified under one of the five types of prepositions. After that, the error was determined whether it was interference from mother tongue (MT) or from target language itself. The findings showed that interlingual errors constituted the majority of the total errors. Arab students use the proper English prepositions providing equivalents are used in their MT; select the improper prepositions if equivalents are not used in their MT; omit English prepositions if equivalents are not required in their MT and add English prepositions if equivalents are required in their MT. MT seems to facilitate the choice of the correct prepositions. Intralingual errors were also detected and found to constitute the other main source of errors. As proficiency increases, reliance on transfer decreases and reliance on overgeneralization increases. It was found that the sophomores and juniors made a higher proportion of errors attributable to overgeneralization than did the low class level. And conversely, the proportion of errors made by freshmen attributable to transfer from Arabic exceeded the proportion of sophomore and juniors' transfer errors, which means that there is a strong effect of the class level on the subjects' performance quantitatively, and that the trend of errors held for the three class levels in the five types of prepositions was similar. There was no clear support for the claim that the lower class level of EFL students made either transfer or overgeneralization errors characteristically different from those made by

higher class levels, but they did appear to use these two learning strategies to different degrees. Concerning the length of the Composition, it was not found to have a consistent relationship with the number of errors, which contradicts the traditional teachers' warnings. The insights derived from the course lecturers' feedback on the problem, lent support to the quantitative results. Lecturers' perceptions and suggestions are presented in the findings, which are illustrated through the use of excerpts from the questionnaire responses. The analysis of results also revealed that the improper use of prepositions is prominent among Arab university EFL students even at advanced stages of their learning. There is evidence in this study supporting the view that emphasizes interference as a cognitive learning strategy in which the learner applies a prior knowledge and experience to the target language. Finally, the results isolate the errors the subjects make, thereby is important for both instructors and learners to examine those common errors and factors for the causes.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Interest in the teaching of English as a global language has been growing throughout the Arab world, and most Arab governments began to introduce the teaching of English as compulsory subject into the school curriculum. This trend has become so popular that there have even been curriculum changes in some parts of the Arab world where languages other than English, particularly French, were traditionally taught in the public system. A case in point is Morocco, where teaching and learning in English has increased, i.e. French has been retreating and losing a lot of ground to English. (Zaki & Najbi, 2001). At present, in most Arab countries, all students who finish the public secondary school education must have had at least eight years of instruction in English as a school subject. So, because of the widespread use of English as a second language, the subject of language teaching in general and teaching English as a foreign or second language in particular, has become the focus of attention of many Arab researchers (Al-Khatib, 2000).

As far as English at tertiary level in the Arab world is concerned, a lot of lip service to Arabization and Arabicization of higher education has been an ongoing issue for approximately 33 years, but remains a highly charged one today. In fact, there is what can be considered a sharp regression on the use of Arabic in higher education in some Arab countries. Sultana (2001) points out that teaching through the medium of English is obvious in the field of higher education with the exception of Syria who maintained a strong teaching tradition through the medium of Arabic. Zughoul, in confirming this issue, he has said that no laws have been enacted or language plans drawn to be implemented regarding the use of Arabic in Arab universities in any Arab country (ibid, 2003).

As far as Arab students is concerned, English as a major skill is needed for further studies or for professional career; they are, as early as Lambert (1968) and Hamdallah (1988) put it, instrumentally motivated to acquire English as means of attaining instrumental goals, furthering a career, reading technical material, translation and so forth. Recently, Rababah, has supported Lambert and Hamdallah's view saying that 'attitudinal studies conducted on Arab students, consistently shown that Arab students are instrumentally motivated to learn English and that they are well aware of the utility of knowing English, the main stimulus for learning English is instrumental, i.e. to achieve a goal, e.g. a career (ibid, 2003). Further, at the social level Knowledge of English remains a prerequisite for the better jobs especially in the private sector, and you can hardly come across a leading government official who does not know English. The use of English is being so entrenched in some Arab countries to the point where you feel that Arabic is relegated to a secondary status.

The overwhelming majority of the population of Jordan speak Arabic as their mother tongue, whereas English by both historical accident and present-day consensus, is learned as the principal foreign language. Although its importance is well recognized by many individuals, its strongest support comes from the government. To sum up the present status of English in the Arab world, Zughoul rightly states: 'despite the hegemonic and imperialistic nature of English, it is still badly needed in the Arab world for the purposes of communicating with the world, education, acquisition of technology and development at large. Teaching still needs more efforts to be exerted to raise the quality and standard of English of the Arab learners at all levels' (Zughoul, 2003:1).

1.2 Education System in Jordan

After the nursery and kindergarten years, the education system in Jordan comprises a 12-year comprehensive program divided into two cycles: basic and secondary. The basic cycle

runs from grades 1-10 and is free and compulsory for all Jordanians. At the end of grade 10, the grades of each student for the previous three years (8th, 9th, and 10th) are calculated to determine in which secondary stream that student can continue. Usually, the student's wishes are taken into account, but the final decision rests with the Ministry of Education. The secondary cycle of two years is divided into two main streams. The first is the comprehensive secondary education stream that ends with a general secondary education certificate (GSEC), the Tawjihi, and consists of a common core curriculum and optional specialized academic or vocational courses. Students in this education level are required to take 9 subjects; Arabic, English, History, Jordanian Studies (including Citizenship), Geography, Chemistry, Biology, and Physics. Islamic studies are also mandatory for all students however it is not required for Christian students. (Ministry of Education, 1990).

The Secondary Education level consists of two years' study for students aged 16 to 18 who have completed the basic cycle (10 years) and comprises two major tracks: secondary education, which can either be academic or vocational. At the end of the two-year period, students sit for the general secondary examination in the appropriate branch and those who pass are awarded the Tawjihi (GSEC). The academic stream qualifies students for entrance to universities, whereas the vocational or technical type qualifies for entrance to community colleges or universities or the job market, provided they pass the two additional subjects. Vocational secondary education provides intensive vocational training and apprenticeship, and leads to the award of a Certificate (not the Tawjihi, but it is called the Vocational Secondary Certificate). This type of education is provided by the Vocational Training Corporation, under the control of the Ministry of Labour / Technical and Vocational Education and Training Higher Council.

1.2.1 Status and the Role of English Language in Jordan

Education in Jordan is both financed and administered by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum, which is uniform throughout the country in both public and private institutions, is set by the Committee for Curriculum and School Textbooks, which also selects and approves all reading materials used in the classroom. With regard to English language, the formal education in Jordan affected by the Educational Reform Plan (ERP) - Phase III- 2000-2005, through which English language has become a compulsory subject to be taught in the Jordanian public schools from the 1st elementary grade (age 6) till the school leaving Exam or the GSCE (it is called Tawjihi) with an average of 5 to 6 periods a week, which means a student completes (12) consecutive years studying English before he/she is enrolled as a freshman in the institutions of higher education. It is important to denote that the subjects of this study had spent (8) not (12) consecutive years studying English at public schools before they were enrolled as freshmen in the university, because the ERP has imposed English teaching for (12) years in the academic year 2000-2001.

The educational ladder has two stages: basic Education is a 10-year compulsory stage and the 2-year secondary stage of education. Secondary education is somewhat selective in enrollment and quite specialized in purpose. Study books are standard; they are distributed by the MOE. Also MOE is now making it mandatory for students to be computer literate and able to apply their studies in computers to their regular studies, most especially the scientific and mathematical courses. Its educational system is of international standards and its secondary education programme is accepted in world-class universities. Nowadays, it is a common practice for pre-school children to be introduced to English alongside with Arabic. If anything, such strong tendencies, and a vision towards making educational policies and laws part of language planning, are indicative of the concern to enable Jordanian students to cope with the latest global developments by mastering the key and most dominant world language, namely English (AL-Khatib, 2000).

The goals posed by the Committee of English Curriculum defined by the Ministry of Education for the teaching of English: among these, students should be able to write English passages that are grammatically correct, properly punctuated and effectively organized, and to understand and communicate using a variety of notions and linguistic functions based on everyday situations. Accordingly, all Jordanian secondary school graduates are expected to develop native-like facility in English which will enable them to communicate spontaneously, effectively and confidently about a broad range of topics (Al-Jayyusi, 1990). The ERP (2000-2005), focuses on the English language skills as a foreign one required for development and modernization and views English language as an important means for promoting relations, assimilating others' cultures, understanding and co-operation between Jordan and the other countries of the world. Knowledge of English by a sizable sector of the population is viewed as essential to economic, educational and technological development of the country. At the national level English in Jordan is conceived of as a key to scientific and technological interaction between nations, and a ticket guaranteeing a shelter under the umbrella of globalization that all nations at present are seeking. (AL-Khatib, 2000; Zughoul, 2003).

1.2.2 Brief Profile of Higher Education in Jordan

Higher education in Jordan began with the second half of the twentieth century, (Abu-El-Haija, 2006), namely the sixties, when numerous Teachers' Colleges were established throughout the country. Their establishment provided the necessary teaching manpower needed to meet the high demand on school education characterizing that era. The first public Jordanian university was the University of Jordan, established in 1962. Yarmouk University followed in 1976; and eight more public universities including AL-Balqa' Applied University (AAU hereafter) as the context of this study were established in different parts of the Kingdom since that date. Additionally, there are thirteen private universities distributed in different provinces of the kingdom too. Master and doctorate's degrees are confined to public universities, except for

'Amman Arab University for Graduate Studies' which is a private university specialized in offering master and doctorate degrees. According to the Higher Education Law no.41 in Jordan, Jordanian students are admitted to all departments and faculties at public universities on the basis of their grades in the *Tawjihi* (GSEC) or its equivalent, who can then choose between private community colleges, public Community Colleges or universities (public and private). The credit-hour system, which entitles students to select courses according to a study plan, is implemented at universities in Jordan. Bachelor's Degrees normally take four years. In Dentistry, Pharmacy and Engineering, studies last for five years. In Medicine, they last for six years, followed by an Internship which lasts for one year. The bachelor's degree requires a total of 126-164 credit hours, depending on the field of study. English is the medium of instruction in almost all schools of public and private universities in Jordan. Though the registration is open for the teaching of several foreign languages as major subjects, e.g. French, Russian, Italian Spanish, Deutsche, Turkish, etc., at tertiary level, but English is still the most important foreign language taught at public and private universities as a major subject. At the undergraduate level, students have the choice to select from among hundred specializations distributed through eleven applied programmes.

1.3 General Perspective on the Importance of Writing Skill

The role of writing is of utmost importance in the learning and teaching of English L2. Writing should contribute to enabling students to clarify and structure their own thinking and enable them to communicate with a wider audience than the one with which they are in daily contact. Writing is a process which includes planning, developing, reviewing, editing and presenting. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in studies related to writing because the skill of writing is very important both in academic studies and outside academic institutions. Bazerman & Paradis (1991:3) state that 'Writing structures our relations with others and organises our perception of the world'. As a productive skill, writing helps students to be

thinkers and learners through direct involvement in the construction of new meaning and through writing, students can achieve academic mastery (Cook, 2001). It is an essential productive skill that is fundamental in advancing knowledge. This is because writing involves the composition of new meaning from fresh ideas and existing facts in which sentences have special relationships to each other (Dietsch, 2000). Bjork and Ransanen (1997:8) argue: 'we highlight the importance of writing in all university curricula not only because of its immediate practical application, i.e. as an isolated skill or ability, but because we believe that, seen from a broader perspective, writing is a thinking tool. It is a tool for language development, for critical thinking and, extension, for learning in all disciplines. This is a line of thought that we shall develop. While there is no room in this research to deal with other studies (e.g. Leki, 1991; Purves, 1988), it is enough to say that these studies enhance the point of interrelatedness or association between the errors of L1 (language one) and L2 (language two) with no restriction to Arabic, English or any other languages.

1.3.1 Writing Skill in EFL Arab Context

Developing learners' writing skills in L2 has been of concern for some time in Arab tertiary education. Students studying in institutions of higher education in the medium of English, which is not their native language, have been found to face serious problems mainly in writing, making them unable to cope with the institution's literacy expectations (Bacha, 2002; Rababah, 2003). In Arab universities, English writing is significant in students' academic course of study as research work depends on it. It is needed for taking notes, describing objects or devices and writing essays, answering questions, writing their compositions, writing experimental reports, etc.

The writing process also helps to develop the students' cognitive skills in acquiring the necessary strategies such as analysis, synthesis, inference and so forth, instrumental in the learning process (Bacha, 2002:164; Al-Khuwaileh & Al-Shoumali, 2000). For these reasons,

writing has always been an essential aspect of the curriculum of English as a major and for academic purposes, the English writing is also a fundamental aim of teaching English in Arab institutions of higher education because English language is the medium of instruction in these institutions (Al-Khuwaileh & Al-Shoumali, 2000).

1.3.2 Studies on EFL Jordanian Learners' Writing Errors

Notwithstanding, the attempts to tackle the difficulties and problems of English language learning/teaching at all levels of education in the Arab world, Arab students still encounter serious problems in their English-writing. Depicting the situation of English in Jordan, Abd Al-Haq (1982 cited in Rababah, 2003:1), rightly states: 'there are general outcries about the continuous deterioration of the standards of English proficiency of students among school teachers, university instructors and all who are concerned with English language teaching'. Supporting Abd Al-Haq, Rababah (2003) goes on to say that Arab Jordanian learners of English encounter several serious problems in speaking and writing, this fact has been clearly stated by many researchers (e.g. Zughoul, 1985, 1991, 2003; Rababah, 2001; AlKhuwaileh & Shoumali, 2000). Sharing the same view, Bacha (2002:161) states: 'L2 writers are known to face problems in developing their writing skills at the university level. These problems are even more accentuated with L1 Arabic non-native speakers of English in required English composition courses'. She has added that Arab learners of ESL /EFL do have serious problems in writing and may not be motivated to develop their writing skills (ibid:161). Similarly, Rababah, states: 'my own experience as teacher of English as a foreign language in schools and other higher education institutions in Jordan, Oman and UAE, has led me to strongly believe that English language graduates in Jordan, where Arabic is the native language, encounter a lot of difficulties in writing' (ibid, 2003). There is a general consensus among English language instructors and linguists (e.g. Shaheen, 1984; zughoul, 1985, 1991, 2003; Al-Khataybeh, 1992; Al-Khuwaili & Al-Shoumali, 2000; Rababah, 2001, 2003; Bataineh, 2005) at the departments of foreign

languages at the Jordanian universities that most EFL students are weak in writing. This problem is invariably reflected on the other courses by exigency of their requirements that entail the continuous writing activity in examinations, assignments, answering written questions, writing, essays, experimental reports, and describing objects etc. To shed some light on the difficulties encounter Arab EFL learners in general and Jordanian EFL learners in particular, here are some examples taken from Jordan and some Arab countries.

Shaheen (1984) analysed a typology of certain recurrent errors made by adult Arab studentsd of English literature from Jordan University. The errors had been produced ‘spontaneously’ in free writing, over a seven to eight year period. He concluded that the preposition, article and stylistic errors made by the Arab students were mainly due to the influence of L1 and strongly disagreed with those linguists who downplay the role of L1 interference in foreign language learning.

Zughoul (1985) reported the results of the proficiency testing of the graduates of the English department at Yarmouk University, Jordan, where the standards were judged to compare positively with those of the rest of the Arab universities. The average equated mean score of the three groups of graduates (168 students) who took the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was 67.75 (individual scores were 68.22, 69.02, and 66.02), which is interpreted in the manual of the test as ‘not proficient enough to take any academic work’. Also on a study of lexical choice to analyze quantitatively and qualitatively the errors made by the Arabic speaking learners, majoring English in the department of English at Yarmouk University in Jordan, Zughoul (1991) has found six hundred ninety one (691) errors classified under thirteen error categories, errors in the use of verbs and prepositions occupied first positions, and this quantity of syntactic errors does not include the frequency of individual lexical items, and these error categories are overlapped in a lot of examples.

Al-Khataybeh (1992) has investigated the syntactic errors of 243 Jordanian male and female students at pre-university stage (secondary circle) through writing compositions. His

findings have shown that there is no significant differences among male and female students, both committed approximately the same percentages of errors in terms of type and number. His study showed that students' errors were due to both L1 interference and L2 interference caused by overgeneralization as well as the strategies employed by the teachers and the students respectively. Total syntactic errors is (2685) distributed according to their highest frequency tense, preposition and articles, concord, pronouns, auxiliaries, subject-verb agreement and third-person singular respectively. Errors were classified, hierarchically, prepositions and articles 35% occupied the second position after verbs. It showed that the strategies and the causes of errors are interrelated. Pedagogically, he suggested a remedial procedure that may help the learners to express themselves in better English, that the Ministry of Education (MOE) should instruct teachers of English to teach more lessons on writing compositions and grammar, because research studies conducted at all levels of education in Jordan showed that Jordanian students at all levels commit a lot of syntactic errors in their written production His results are in line with Zughoul's (1991) results in terms of mother tongue influence (MTI) that has been found to play the major role in students errors.

Hashim (1996), has reviewed studies on syntactic errors made by Arabic-speaking students in learning English, his results show that a lot of errors have been found and presented in seven syntactic categories respectively: verbal, relative clause, prepositions, conjunction, adverbial clauses, sentence structure, and articles. It has also been reported that the influence of native language (mother tongue) has been found to be the most common source of these deviations. L2 interference i.e. Intralingual errors are also found in those reviewed studies due to implementing some strategies as overgeneralization, false application of rules, simplification and induced errors (ibid, 1996). Similar note supporting Hashim has been given by Kharma, and Hajjaj (1997) in their study on Arab EFL learners' errors, that the majority of their errors are in English syntax, and in particular, prepositions are the most troublesome aspect of syntax.

A study on writing errors of Arab learners in academic English and Arabic at the university level, Al-Khuwaileh and Al- Shoumali (2000) address the question of whether there is a link between the huge number of errors made by Jordanian university students' writing in English and Arabic. A sample of 150 university students was asked to write on the same topic both in English and Arabic. The study concluded that students' errors in writing Arabic are strongly associated with their errors in English. The types of errors found mostly were syntactical errors. The authors have suggested that these problems could be attributed to students' weaknesses in writing both in Arabic and in English. More efforts and more lessons should be given to teaching writing and grammar of both languages.

The results of the TOEFL test administered by (Rababah, 2001) of English majors (160 students) at Yarmouk University in Jordan support these claims, as the individual scores ranged from 26 percent to 72 percent. When compared to TOEFL test standards, the top score was 510. The average means score was 59.32. This average mean score indicates the low proficiency level of English majors and they are not proficient enough to take any academic work.

Halima (2001) in her study analyses matched writing samples of 100 native Arabic speakers' writing on WST (Writing for Science and Technology) topics in English and Arabic. The aim of this study was to investigate the writing errors of the students' writing in Arabic and English for Science and Technology. The initial assessment of acceptable WST is carried out by three English speaking and two Arabic speaking WST teachers using ten criteria. The findings indicate that, though students have studied EFL writing for eight years, and are judged to be fairly good at the mechanics (i.e capitalisation, punctuation, spelling and handwriting), but in lexis and grammar, they still have significant difficulties in syntax. Her study shows that the class level proficiency has a strong effect on the performance of students. Errors of prepositions constitute a significant proportion of the total errors which goes in line with Arab studies who have found MTI and proportion of preposition errors are significant. Halima ascribed Arab learners' difficulties to the fact that learners transfer rhetorical irregularities of the Arabic

discourse over into their English writing. This conclusion is supported in part by the results of a questionnaire given to their WST teachers which demonstrates that these teachers place great emphasis on linguistically-oriented elements and very little on style, and in part by an analysis of the Arabic corpus on the basis of communicative Arabic, rather than WST style. This analysis clearly shows that features considered good in communicative Arabic are not acceptable in either Arabic or English WST.

Zughoul & Hussein (2003) have investigated lexical semantics and strategies used by Arab learners of English at Yarmouk University-Jordan. Their study purports to determine the extent to which university English language majors can use English collocations properly. A two-form translation test of 16 Arabic collocations was administered to 70 graduate and undergraduate students of English. The first form included the English translation in a multiple-choice format, whereas the other was given as a free translation task. The findings confirmed the hypothesis that Arab learners of English at all levels face problems with English collocational sequences, and the effect of the class level proficiency was obvious that the graduates outperformed the undergraduates with a significant difference. Moreover, the study aimed at characterizing communicative strategies implemented by the subjects in their attempts to convey the English meaning. Twelve such strategies (e.g. avoidance, overgeneralization (analogy), literal translation, substitution, false IL assumptions, etc.) have been identified, exemplified, and described. The findings have substantiated the role of the native language in foreign language production as well as the need for explicit instructional focus on collocation in school and community. TL interference (TLI) has also been detected constituted some of the errors.

Similarly, Bataineh (2005) analysed 205 compositions written by Jordanian first-, second-, third- and fourth-year university EFL students at Yarmouk University-Jordan. Her study aimed at indentifying the kinds of errors they made in use the English article system at all proficiency levels. The main objective was to identify and analyze the errors made as well as their traceability to either or both languages. Her study is cited because it was conducted on a

cross-section of Jordanian university students via written compositions similar to the present study in terms of the context, sample, design and method employed and tracing the sources of errors to either or both languages. Also to see the effect of the class level proficiency on subjects' performance. The findings are inconsistent with the previous research; they revealed that the impact of the learners' native language is less than the transfer of the target language itself. As Bataineh says: 'the intralingual errors constitute the major part of subjects' errors. This result is inconsistent with her findings of previous studies she had conducted in the same context. In other words, with the learners' increasing command of the target language; there was a clearly detectible pattern of growth in the subjects' ability to conform to the rules of English. The effect of class level was obvious, the seniors and juniors outperformed their counterparts of freshmen and sophomores.

Al-Buainain (2007) has investigated the writing errors made by EFL Arab students majoring in English. Al-Buainain's study is an outcome of teachers' concerns and efforts to identify the problems and to understand the key issues to EFL writing so as to suggest a remedial procedure that might help the learners to express themselves in better English. It aims at finding areas of difficulty in the written production among Arab students and to work out remedial procedures to help them overcome their weaknesses. The data of the study is 40 exam scripts of the first writing course. The subjects are of different class level proficiency and all of them are female students majoring in English. Their ages range from 18-20 years. These learners have finished 8 years of English language instruction at school and are taking English courses including reading, grammar and lab. Subjects were asked to write a letter of 200 to 250 words and in the second topic, subjects were asked to write a text of 350 to 400 words in a time pressure of two hours. Findings showed that sentence-level grammatical errors committed by the learners were mostly of syntactic features, namely verbs, prepositions, relative clauses, articles, fragments, noun and modifiers classified hierarchically. Prepositions constitute about 27% of the total errors. Here some cited examples: (a) I will greatly appreciate to you if you

send me. (b) answer about my inquiry. (c) I promise to meet her in last weekend. (d) I want to pursue the study at foreign *country*. (e) I want ot research on preventive medicine. (f) I am spending great effort *on* my life. The samples present the commonest or most frequent Arabic-speakers errors in English. Many of these errors are, of course, common to all non-native users of English. Al-Buainain (2007), has commented on the results and said ‘the most frequently expressed specific needs were vocabulary and grammar’. She concludes that students commit a lot of syntactic errors which distort their written communication. The main sourse of errors is mother tongue and the intricacies of the target langauge itself respectively. Most of the learners’ prepositions errors are errors of substitution. She goes on to say that ‘writing is one of the most difficult and therefore frustrating ‘subjects’ to teach particularly in an EFL programme and that her study could be used as a starting poin’. In fact, the ability to communicate cannot be fulfilled unless ‘the grammar’is there (in the competence) of the writer, and ‘second language learning is as much a process as writing is a process (Myers, 1997:1). The effect of the studying year level was not clear in her study.

In brief, the empirical data of the foregoing studies have shown that EFL Jordanian learners at all levels encounter several problems in all language skills. The great number of errors that Jordanian learners of English produce is in writing. Committing a lot of errors (mainly syntactic and grammatical) in their writing as averred by many Arab and Jordanian researchers e.g. Al Buainain, 2007; Bataineh, 2005; Rababah, 2001, 2003; Zughoul, 1985, 1991, 2003; Al-Khuwaileh and Al-Shoumali, 2000; Al-Khataybeh, 1992 ; Shaheen, 1984; is the prominent feature of Arab adult learners of English. Prepositions are a core case in a point, which appears to be an ever-lasting problem, thereby indicates how the seriousness of the problem is. The foregoing studies have also recommended further research for explaining the sources and causes of the syntactical and grammatical errors by Arab EFL learners. Several reasons for the weaknesses of Arab learners of English have been reported by the above studies, e.g. lack of knowledge on the part of school graduates when they join the university, school

and English language department curricula, lack of the target language environment, teaching methodology and the learners' motivation. It is also an indication that the objectives of the English departments in the Arab world, and more specifically in Jordan, have not yet been achieved, (Zugoul, 2003; Rababah, 2003). Hence, it would benefit learners, teachers and researchers to undertake a systematic in-depth study to probe into one slide of these problematic areas of syntax, which is very seldom to find in the Arab World, i.e. investigating the errors made by Arab Jordanian EFL students, at the tertiary level, in the use of English prepositions per se. It is with this purpose in mind that the investigator has selected the following problem for the present study to investigate its source/s and find out if possible, the remedial procedures that can elevate the students' level and lessen the number of repeaters every semester.

1.4 The Statement of the Problem

Given the importance of English writing as a fundamental aim of teaching English in Jordanian institutions of higher education, the increasing need to graduate students that are fairly competent in English to join and function in the 21st century and to meet the local needs of the country, as the main goal of teaching English in Jordan (Al-Jayyusi, 1990; Zughoul, 2003), yet, this is not the case. Despite this keen interest in the writing skill as a basic aim of teaching English at the tertiary level, it seems that Arab learners' improper use of the English prepositions which negatively affects the whole theme and schema of their writing as referred to and emphasized by several Arab and Jordanian investigators via their empirical studies (e.g. Al-Buainain, 2007; Bataineh, 2005; Rababah, 2001, 2003; Zughoul, 1985, 1991, 2003; Al-Khataybeh, 1992; Obeidat, 1986; Hamdallah, 1988). These researchers have reported that the improper use of the English prepositions is the prominent feature of Arab Jordanian adult learners of English as a foreign language. In other words, despite the positive attitude and keen interest in English writing as a fundamental aim of teaching English in the Jordanian universities, the majority of Jordanian learners have always been labeled as weak and low

proficient EFL learners, and that they are not proficient enough to take any academic work, (Zughoul, 2003, 1985; Rababah, 2001, 2003). To shed more light on this problem, more recent Arab studies also emphasized the difficulties encountered EFL Arab students in using prepositions.

For example, studies conducted by Zahid, 2006; Mohammed, 2005; Mourtaga, 2004; Mahmoud, 2002, on Arab students, to investigate writing syntactic errors revealed a great consistency regarding difficulties encountered Arab EFL university students in using prepositions. From the empirical data collected in these studies, it shows that the four university class levels (freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors) have been found incompetent in using English prepositions. The four researchers, further, emphasized and concluded that the interference of learners' native language is a major source of learners' errors and that errors in prepositions are numerous and constitute a very significant proportion of the total syntactic errors. The intralingual interference of the TL itself is also detected as a source of learners' errors. These researchers ascribe errors to several reasons e.g. learners' lack of knowledge of English grammar rules, strategies learners employ in learning, the difficulty of the English prepositional system, etc.

Prepositions, as a case in a point, always ranked in the first or second position among the most common syntactic, lexical and grammatical errors; this faulty usage of prepositions has been depicted and labeled by some scholars (e.g. Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Mukattash, 1986), as a 'persistent serious problem'. Sharma (2004) argues that for native speaker of Arabic 'learning English is an uphill task in grammar, writing and usage. That is because genealogically and typologically, English and Arabic are miles apart' (ibid, 2004). Supporting this fact, with regard to the difficulty of prepositions usage, Mahmoud (2002) has reported 78 idioms in his study contain grammatical and lexical errors, for example, he cited: a. *'the eye by the eye' (= an eye for an eye). b. *'in his face' (= to his face) c. *'in my service' (= at my service) d. 'hand by hand' (=hand in hand). Regarding the grammatical errors, Mahmoud says that most of them were in the areas of prepositions and articles, and both grammatical and lexical errors reflecting

the words and structure of the corresponding Arabic idioms. Mourtaga, (2004), for instance, has shown that the Arabic preposition ‘*bi*’ corresponds to the English prepositions ‘by, with, at, in, and for’; similarly, the preposition ‘*fi*’ corresponds to the three English prepositions ‘in, at and on’ which creates a lot of confusion to learners in selecting the proper one, (ibid, 2004). Mohammad (2005) has found that in all of the incorrect grammatical collocations, the errors were cases of selection or addition of an incorrect preposition and most of them were due to negative interlingual transfer from Arabic, eg. *by this way (*in*) *by money (*for*) *in the phone (*on*) *on contact (*in*) **affect in* health* *seeking for* help. The inter-intralingual errors in the use of prepositions detected in his study lend support to other Arab investigators’ findings, (e.g. Zahid, 2006; Mohammed, 2000; Mahmoud, 2002). The problem is evident in committing a lot of syntactical, lexical and grammatical errors, and is more evident in using prepositions specifically as it is reported and asserted by the above Jordandian and Arab researchers. The problem is also well-documented in the reviewed literature. (see chapter II- section: 2.11). Thereby, it is necessitating a stronger emphasis on the need to delve in and hopefully to overcome this persistent problematic area of syntax, i.e. prepositions per se.

Despite the existence of this persistent problem as depicted by researchers mentioned above, it is the vision of the researcher, that the Jordanian university EFL learners can improve their writing skills and be able to cope with the institution’s literacy expectations with the minimal proportion of errors in the use of prepositions in their writing, if more sincere effort and determination, more effective instruction, appropriate remedial teaching and procedures explaining and elaborating on grammatical rules in regard are provided.

To conclude, three problems inspired the present study. First, teaching and practicing English grammar in general and prepositions in particular, by and large fail to improve students competence in using prepositions even at advance stages, which leads to the second problem: that teaching and practicing prepositions are neglected in the agenda of the teaching process; third, the extent to which the sources and causes of errors (in acquiring prepositions) affect Arab

Jordanian EFL students at the tertiary level, is yet to be determined. Hence, it is a sine qua non in this situation to investigate the possible effects of these factors, namely interlingual and intralingual interferences that may account for the causes of errors in the use of the prepositions by Arab Jordanian university students. It is with this research threefold problem and its possible causes in mind; the investigator paves the way and presents the research objectives and questions in the two coming sections.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the interlingual and intralingual errors made by Jordanian university EFL students in the use of prepositions in their writing. The objectives of this study are to: 1- identify types of errors in a hierarchical order in terms of the frequency of their use; 2- determine whether the possible source of the errors can be attributed to interlingual interference; 3- determine whether the possible sources of the errors can be attributed to intralingual interference; 4- determine the difference of students' errors, which can be attributed to the class level; 5-determine the difference of students' errors which can be attributed to the average length of compositions; 6- Obtain insights from lecturers' perspectives for possible solutions on how to overcome the problems in using English prepositions correctly.

1.6 Research Questions

This dissertation study is planned to investigate the interlingual and intralingual errors made by EFL Arab Jordanian students' errors in the use of prepositions in their writing. Therefore, it is mainly exploratory and descriptive in nature. Proceeding from the foregoing purposes, the data collection process of this study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the most common errors made by Arab Jordanian EFL undergraduates in the use of prepositions?

RQ 2: To what extent does the Interlingual interference account for the errors made by Arab Jordanian EFL undergraduates, in the use of prepositions?

RQ 3: To what extent does the Intralingual interference account for the errors made by Arab Jordanian EFL undergraduates, in the use of prepositions?

RQ 4: To what extent can the difference of students' errors be attributed to their class level?

RQ 5: To what extent can the difference of students' errors be attributed to the average length of compositions?

RQ 6: What are the course lecturers' perspectives on how to overcome the difficulties in using prepositions correctly?

Consequently, the researcher will attempt to recommend possible ways of remediation to overcome these difficulties and to provide some possible suggestions for further research in regard. Also it is important to mention here that this study is descriptive in nature and not experimental study, so the researcher felt that the research questions can accomplish the objectives of this study.

1.7 Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this study emerges from three-fold justification. The first one could be attributed to the fact that a good number of the studies (e.g. Khama & Hajjaj, 1997; Mohammad, 2005, 2000; Mourtaga, 2004; AbiSamra, 2003; Diab, 1997; Hashim, 1996; Hamdallah, 1988) which yield important findings, are specifically conducted to examine grammatical morphemes, lexical collocation, or syntactic errors holistically, While the present study has been found to focus on a slice of these problematic areas. It is intended to do a comprehensive systematic and an in-depth analysis of EFL learners' errors specifically in the acquisition of prepositions in English writing per se, hoping to find a possible way of remediation for this problematic area. Also from the reviewed literature, it was noticed that prepositions constitute a major

problematic area encounter learners of Arabic speakers learning English at all levels. The problem is widespread enough to call for serious attention.

The second integral part of the justification for conducting this research is that the importance of prepositions, as an important integral part of English grammar, in communication through writing or other communicative means when the need arises. Fries (1940) reported that an average of thirty six and a half meanings recorded and illustrated in the Oxford English Dictionary for each of the nine most frequent prepositions, which are: '*at , by, for , from ,in, of, on to, and with* . The number of meanings ranges from 'fifteen for the preposition 'from' to sixty-three for the preposition 'of', and these function words with substantives occur very frequently; in fact, 92.6 % of the instances in the standard English material. Total is 329 senses and 3,205 out of 3,448 = (92.6%) of the given instances in standard English (ibid:112-113). This indicates how much these grammatical functional words are important to be mastered to enable EFL learners to achieve their writing skill and other communicative skills effectively.

Therefore, grammar is the tool needed to handle a language correctly. It explains the words, their forms and their functions, and the rules used to build sentences correctly. A writer would be more and more confident; avoids blurring his message and the reader's misunderstanding. Ulijn and Strother (1995:153) state: 'writing and speaking are generally considered the active or productive skills of language usage. They have some aspect in common in the planning or conceptualization of the message'. Prepositions are a core case in a point, because they are relationship words, they relate some word or phrase to another word or phrase, most often in terms of location, direction, time, reason, cause, rate purpose, source etc., so they are the tasty morsels for the grammar gourmet which function the language. The present study is confined to errors in the use of prepositions only in English writing at the sentence level. Several errors at the sentence level will distort the intended meaning , make the meaning ambiguous or vague, and the reader will misunderstand the intended message of erroneous writing.

The third integral part of the logical justification of this study is that, despite the hegemonic and imperialistic nature of English, it is still badly needed in the Arab world for the purposes of communicating with the world, education, acquisition of technology and development in its widest sense. Communication is the heart of all human interactions; it is the art and technique of using key words like prepositions effectively to impart information by various means such as writing. Communication would not be performed effectively and competently as long as prepositions constitute a major problematic area. This problematic area is well documented in the related literature and attested in the researcher's experience as a teacher of English at one of the public universities in Jordan. Something needs to be done to rectify this inadequacy experienced by EFL Arab Jordanian university students in using these chaotic troublesome words in their writing. Hence, the researcher thought that it is only wise to conduct a proper research in order to find out what makes the process of learning English prepositions a problematic area.

1.8 The Significance of the Study

This study derives its significance from the significance of the topic, the objectives it addresses, the conclusions it draws, the pedagogical implications it obtains and the fact that it attempts to explore a new area in performance analysis, namely the relationship between the average length of compositions and the number of errors in them, which is hoped to add another perspective to the current literature on the English prepositional system.

This study can be considered significant, in that, it addresses one of the most important academic issues confronting Jordanian students at different levels of English learning in Jordan. In respect of this academic issue, the empirical research regarding students' performance of using English prepositions in their writing is not only scarce, but urgently needed due to the continuous faulty usage of prepositions yielding big number of malformed sentences and distorted written production as referred to by several researchers. The few previous Jordanian

studies have been conducted on syntactic errors, merely describing them holistically. None of these studies, to the knowledge of the researcher, has been conducted to investigate difficulties of using prepositions in writing per se. Therefore, the primary significance of this study lies in taking a further step toward investigating and gaining a comprehensive understanding of this prepositional problem, its nature, sources and causes and its effects on teachers and learners by providing them with some new insights into appropriate teaching methods and materials to facilitate the process of prepositions acquisition. It is the first attempt to investigate and analyze the possible effects of interlingual and intralingual interference on the acquisition of the English prepositions per se, i.e. independent from other syntactic-grammatical errors, by EFL Arab learners at tertiary level.

Over and above these concerns which are particular to Jordanians, it is intended that this study will be of value in increasing our knowledge in the burgeoning (growing, or developing) field of L2 acquisition and further, will provide useful information for language planners, curriculum designers and teachers, teachers of Arab EFL learners in particular, and teachers interested in foreign language learning in general. It is also believed that the empirical data would be a launching pad for future research and provoke other researchers for further investigation in this regard. Errors are significant in several respects. Studies on errors, their sources and the reasons those errors emerge are of great importance and significance to the learning and teaching process, several researchers (e.g. Corder, 1986; Salebi, 2004; Zahid, 2006) have highlighted the importance of such studies in providing information regarding the students' weakness in the learning process.

Theoretically, Error Analysis gives indications as to what general tendencies there are for committing errors. Errors are believed to be an indicator of the learners' stages in their target language development. This information is important to the theory of language learning and to the language specialist whose interest centers not on an individual class but on a conception of the language teaching process in general. From the errors that learners commit, one can

determine their level of mastery of the language system. The investigation of errors has thus a double purpose: it is diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic because it can tell us about the language learner's language (Corder, 1986) at a given point during the learning process and prognostic because it can tell course organizers to reorient language learning materials on the basis of the learners' current problems.

Pedagogically speaking, it is also believed that findings of this cross-sectional study could stand significantly to benefit the students and teachers in the program of B.A. degree by suggesting some possible new pedagogical strategies for learning prepositions based on these findings, and how to associate the correct use of prepositions with the techniques and methods offered by this research. Besides, to set right those common errors, which are considered serious for their high and constant frequency; composing certain drills and exercises aimed at upgrading L2 learners' acquisition of English prepositions, improve their competence and proficiency in grammar, leads learners to produce an effective writing; and eventually the learner would be able to review his class papers, noting and correcting any prepositional errors may encounter him, in accordance with the possible key solutions and relevant ideas that will be suggested by this study.

At the level of pragmatic classroom experience errors will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort. knowledge of the errors might provide teachers guidelines on how to cope with this problem and to pinpoint the weak points of their students and their methods of English instruction as well, especially when the teacher familiarizes himself with the types of errors that his students make in order to determine the sequence and emphasis of instruction. They provide the researcher the evidence of how language has been acquired and what are the strategies the learner is employing in her/his learning the target language; and they are a means whereby learners test their hypotheses about the L2 (James, 1998).

The study is also significant by its results that could be generalized to similar populations of higher education contexts in Jordan and the Arab world. Since this study is based on empirical data, it can find its way to the interested educators and administrators of Al-Balqa Applied University and other Jordanian and Arab universities to tailor the courses of the English departments to meet the current needs of their students.

Consequently, it is hoped that the findings of this study could be of real assistance to curriculum planners, material designers and textbooks writers in devising remedial material by re-examining, re-orienting and re-constructing new language materials based on students' specified current problems.

1.9 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study limits its scope by focusing only on the errors in the use of prepositions resulted from linguistic factors that may affect the FL/ SL acquisition. i.e. the possible effects of interference from the habits of the learner's L1, i.e. (interlingual interference) and the interference of the TL itself, i.e. (intralingual interference), and its causes as mentioned by Richards, J. C. (1971:206) such as ignorance of rules restrictions, incomplete application of rules, over-generalization (false analogy), false concepts hypothesized, will be accounted for. Other grammatical or syntactic errors are out of the scope of this study such as verbs, relative clauses, articles etc. Male and female students in Jordan are exposed to the same EFL teaching and learning conditions at schools and universities, and they do not learn EFL differently, therefore, the study is delimited to female undergraduates only (due to some feasible reasons) which might not give the statistical support for decisive findings that may be directly generalisable to the entire of Arab and Jordanian higher education students' population, but limited in its scope and generalizability of results to English prepositions and to population similar to the present one in Jordan and in the Arab world. Besides, this study is not concerned with the individual differences among the participants regarding their frequency of English